

## Gluten Free Products – Prescribing Guidelines

### Summary

- From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 HRW CCG asks GPs to stop prescribing gluten free products on NHS prescriptions. GPs may allow exceptionality, for example, should they consider there to be a genuine risk to the nutritional status of a vulnerable individual that will be relieved by the prescribing of gluten free products. This is expected to be very rare.
- The CCG continues to advise patients to follow a gluten free diet. Many foods are naturally free from gluten such as rice, potatoes, meat, fish, fruit and vegetables.
- Gluten free products, such as breads, are now widely available to buy, with improved choice and quality.
- The total cost to the NHS of gluten free pasta or bread on prescription can be six to ten times the price of a similar GF product in local shops.
- The prescribing of gluten free products may be continued in exceptional circumstances, see below. Review requirements apply.

### Guidance

This guidance provides information on assessing patients with exceptional circumstances who may require continued supply of gluten free products on prescription. Prescribers will need to use their knowledge of patients' individual circumstances to enable a judgement to be made. The aim is to ensure a consistent approach is applied across HRW CCG and limited NHS resources are used appropriately.

Exceptional circumstances are situations where a coeliac patient on income support or pension credit (see GF exemption form) has become or would become undernourished and this would be addressed or prevented by the prescribing of gluten free products on NHS prescription. This extends to the guardian of the patient also being on income support or pension credit. An example may include a family on income support that has a child with coeliac disease that is undernourished because of the non-affordability of GF bread.

Access to shops is not considered to be an issue as patients will be visiting shops (or having deliveries) for other shopping, where either gluten free products or foods naturally free in gluten will be available to buy. A busy lifestyle would also not routinely be considered a reason to need GF products on prescription. Internet ordering is also relatively easy.

NICE Guidance (NG20, September 15) advises that "A healthcare professional with a specialist knowledge of coeliac disease should tell people with a confirmed diagnosis of coeliac disease (and their family members or carers, where appropriate) about the

importance of a gluten-free diet and give them information to help them follow it". Patients can be referred to a dietician for additional advice and support in maintaining a GF diet.

When a GP is sufficiently convinced that there is a genuine risk that an individual (as described above) is (or is at risk of becoming) undernourished and this would be addressed (or prevented) by the prescribing of GF items on FP10, then the GP should consider exceptionality. The GP may then present the patient (or guardian) with a GF exemption form for the patient (or guardian) to complete and this should be scanned and saved to patient records. The GP can then prescribe for the named patient. Items should be restricted to that individual alone, in quantity (see appendix 1) and product type (bread loaf or bread/flour mix only) as approved on 'NHS Drug Tariff listed' GF products.

It is anticipated that this exceptionality will be very rare. Any individual patient that is prescribed GF products on FP10 should be reviewed every six to twelve months to ensure exceptional circumstances continue to apply. Appropriate paperwork can be completed again to support ongoing prescribing.

The prescribing of any other GF items such as bread rolls, baguettes, nan-bread, pizza bases, wraps, cakes, biscuits, crackers, oats and breakfast cereals is not approved by the CCG.

#### Patient resources

The CCG recommends that coeliac patients continue to follow a GF diet, with advice available through various patient support organisations, like Coeliac UK, on how to achieve an appropriate diet through natural and manufactured GF foods. This lifestyle management should help to reduce the risk of long-term complications associated with poor nutrition.

- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Coeliac-disease/Pages/Treatment.aspx>
- <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/>
- HRW CCG Patient Information leaflet

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## Appendix 1

### Quantity limits

Gluten-free foods have been allocated a 'unit' value based on their carbohydrate and energy content.

<b>1 unit</b> is equivalent to	<b>400g</b> bread
<b>2 units</b> is equivalent to	<b>500g</b> bread/flour mix

The number of units prescribed per month for a patient should not exceed that defined in the following table:

AGE/SEX	SUGGESTED MONTHLY UNITS	AGE/SEX	SUGGESTED MONTHLY UNITS
Women 19 – 74	14	1 – 3 years	10
Women 75+	12	4 – 6	11
3 <sup>rd</sup> trimester of pregnancy	Add 1 unit	7 – 10	13
Breastfeeding	Add 4 units	11 – 14	15
Men 19 – 59	18	15 - 18	18
Men 60 – 74	16	Higher level of physical activity (any age or sex)	Add 4 units
Men 75+	14		

### Product Types

Only bread loaves and bread or flour mix products should be prescribed. Any prescribed GF product must also be approved on 'NHS Drug Tariff listed' GF products.